

## **Lake Okeechobee Interagency Task Force Meeting Proceedings**

The following personnel attended the Lake Okeechobee Interagency Task Force meeting on Wednesday, November 19, 2003 at the South Florida Water Management District Okeechobee Service Center in Okeechobee, Florida.

### U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Florida Operations Office (COE)

Steve Sullivan

Ryan Peck

Angie Huebner

Richard Bailey

### Applied Aquatic Management, Incorporated (AAM)

Roger Beard (AAM on-site supervisor)

### Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)

Don Fox

### South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)

Mike Bodle

### General Public

Raymond Jones

## **1. Public Comment Period**

A member of the public expressed satisfaction with a slide presentation given by FWC at the Water Regulation Schedule (WSE) Biannual Meeting at the SFWMD office in West Palm Beach. FWC explained how high water levels have detrimental effects on marsh vegetation, wildlife, fish and the estuarine systems connected to the lake and river system.

A member of the public expressed concern about floating vegetation blocking the access to Lock 7 Boat Ramp. The COE treats the vegetation when an access problem occurs.

## **2. Status Report of Spray Program**

Roger Beard (AAM on-site supervisor) reported spray crews have treated approximately 1205 acres of water hyacinth and water lettuce since the last interagency meeting. The majority of the work was completed in the following areas: West Wall, Pelican Bay, Torry & Kreamer Islands, Harney Pond Canal, Chancy Bay, Fisheating Bay, Monkey Box, Taylor Creek and residential canals, Kissimmee River, Indian Prairie Canal, Eagle Bay, Buckhead Ridge Canal, LD-4 and Hendry Isles.

### **3. Report of Aerial Survey of Floating Vegetation on Lake**

An aerial flight was conducted on Friday 14 November. The lake elevation on this date was 16.29 ft msl. The average estimate of treatable floating vegetation on Lake Okeechobee was 710 acres. Areas of concern include Harney Pond Canal to the Kissimmee River and King's Bar (see attachment 1).

Interagency members were concerned with the amount of treatable floating vegetation acreage estimate from the aerial flight. The treatable floating vegetation acreage is not in maintenance control (350 acres). Several strategies were suggested to try to reduce the acreage. SFWMD and COE identified a few large dense areas of target vegetation where aerial treatments could be completed. The COE and AAM will conduct ground surveys of the areas to determine the feasibility of an aerial treatment. Other suggestions were to maximize ground crew applicators and conduct treatments on weekends when weather conditions permit. Treatments on weekends will be conducted deeper in the marsh away from high use recreational and fishing areas. Aerial treatments in combination with ground treatments will help reduce target floating vegetation acreage and minimize treatments later during the peak of the recreation and spawning seasons.

The COE will develop a treatment plan of action and submit the plan to interagency members for review and comments. AAM contacted the aerial subcontractor to determine the possibility of completing an aerial application. The subcontractor's schedule is open at this time. Interagency members can assist staffing the boundaries of aerial treatment areas to eliminate public usage during treatment. FWC will provide COE a fishing tournament list for consideration when scheduling aquatic plant treatments.

### **4. Old Business**

There was no old business discussed at the meeting.

### **5. Discussion Topics:**

#### **Cattail Management - FWC**

In October, FWC aerielly treated 100 acres of dense cattail along the scraped area between Indian Prairie Canal and the wildlife island north of Tin House Cove. FWC has funding to treat 500 acres of cattail in 2004. Areas being considered for treatment include Moonshine Bay, Cody's Cove, King's Bar and the scrape area.

#### **Mechanical Harvester Work - COE**

One harvester is currently working in the rim canal near Old Sportsman's Village.

The harvesters removed tussock material in the rim canal between the C-5A cable and the north end of McTush Canal, Monkey Box Run, Old Moore Haven Canal, Dyess Ditch and Harney Pond Canal.

#### **Terrestrial Exotic Plant Treatment Update - COE**

AAM has conducted a follow-up treatment on Brazilian pepper along the west side of Harney Pond Canal. A follow-up treatment of Lygodium (Old World Climbing Fern) was also conducted along the LD-3 levee.

#### **Ritta and Kreamer Island Burn Plan – SFWMD and FWC**

A burn plan has been completed for Ritta and Kreamer Islands. The goal of the burn plan is to remove the vegetation on the earthen berms to allow backfilling into the adjacent barrow canals. The burn plan is part of a habitat restoration project being completed by FWC to reestablish hydrologic flow between the wetland habitats inside the islands and the surrounding lake. SFWMD will conduct the burn prior to the start of the restoration project that is scheduled to begin in early January 2004. FWC will provide COE a copy of the restoration plan.

#### **Escort herbicide label update for aerial treatments - SFWMD**

SFWMD has requested a special local needs label to treat Lygodium in an aquatic environment with Escort. A concern with the request was a need to address the potential impacts to endangered plants such as the Okeechobee gourd if treatments would occur in Lake Okeechobee. Anyone treating Lygodium within the levees of Lake Okeechobee should contact Mike Bodle at the SFWMD Office in West Palm Beach prior to treatment.

## **6. Next Meeting**

**The next meeting will be held on Wednesday January 21, 2004 at 10:00 a.m. at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Florida Operations Office in Clewiston, Florida**

**The public comment period will be from 10:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Members of the public wishing to be placed on the agenda for the public comment period should contact Richard Bailey at 863-983-8101 ext. 243.**